Christian Community

Volume 8, No. 8 October, 1956

General Synod Approves Social Action Recommendations

A PRAYER FOR THE NATION

O God of righteousness and peace, who holdest the nations in the hollow of Thy hand, we pray for the rulers and the people of our nation. Guide and direct those who exercise the responsibilities of high office, we beseech Thee, that they may be wise in counsel, prudent in speech, faithful in action, seeking the highest welfare of all and untiring in their endeavors to promote justice, freedom, and harmony among the nations. By Thy Spirit enliven the consciences and enlighten the minds of our citizens that they may consider earnestly the decisions they must make concerning the direction of our common life and may discharge the stewardship of the ballot as sons and daughters accountable unto Thee, their Creator and Judge. Save us from the pride as well as from the abuse of power, from fear of honest debate as from petty or bitter strife, from rigidity and self-righteousness no less than from the abandonment of principle. And teach us how we may become better instruments of Thy purpose in the world. Through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

THE CHRISTIAN CITIZEN AND POLITICAL PARTICIPATION

By Kenneth L. Smith

Importance of Political Decisions

Whether we are aware of it or not and whether we like it or not, the future of the world is, humanly speaking, being increasingly determined by *political decisions*. The lives of all of us are affected by the issues that are determined in the arena of power politics. This is understandable when we recognize that the political institutions of our society, especially the Federal Government, have extended their powers into every aspect of our social structure. It is estimated that the scope and intensity of the operation of the Federal Government has increased almost one hundredfold since 1914. At the present time the activities of the Federal Government are so extensive that domestic prosperity and international peace are dependent upon the operations of this political organ. Whether schools will be erected and roads constructed, whether Social Security will be extended to more people, whether our public schools will be integrated, whether we will have peace in the Middle East depend upon political decisions, sometimes upon the machinations of corrupt and ignorant politicians. All these issues—peace, freedom, security, health, education, racial justice—affect the lives of every citizen of the United States. The satisfactory resolution of these issues depends upon *political decisions* and *political policies*.

Determination of Political Decisions

It is true not only that political decisions are crucial, but also that many of the most crucial decisions are deter-

Continued on Page 3, Col. 1

Reprinted from *Social Progress*, Vol. XLVI, No. 10, June, 1956, Copyright by the Board of Christian Education of the Presbyterian Church in the United States of America. Used by permission.

Supports United Nations Economic Development Program

The Tenth General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, meeting at Franklin and Marshall College, Lancaster, Pennsylvania, August 31 to September 7, took action on a number of resolutions having to do with Christian Social Action.

Outstanding among these resolutions was a series of statements regarding International Affairs. In one resolution General Synod affirmed the principle of our nation's responsibility to God, pointing out that this involves respect for human rights, devotion to justice, the pursuit of peace, the use of our natural resources in such a way that they will benefit not only our own people but also assist others to secure a higher standard of living, and persistent search for ways to secure cooperation among the nations.

In separate resolutions General Synod went on record reaffirming its support of the United Nations, encouraging our government to undertake and expand the program of technical assistance and to take the lead in the creation of a special fund for economic development under the United Nations. The General Synod also expressed its support of the decision of the United States to make available atomic materials to other nations for peaceful uses and urged the government to continue its efforts to achieve effective international control of nuclear weapons.

In dealing with another section of the report of the committee on the work of the Commission, a carefully worked out statement of principles entitled "A

Continued on Page 2, Col. 1

General Synod Approves Social Action Report

Continued from Page 1, Col. 3

Christian Approach to Race Relations" was approved and commended for circulation and use in our churches. The Synod also expressed support of the Supreme Court decision outlawing segregation in public schools, and voted that meetings of the General Synod and any other national meetings sponsored by the denomination should be held only where all facilities used in connection with the meeting are open to all participants alike with no regard to race or color.

A high moment of the entire session came when, following considerable discussion on the wording of the latter resolution, a statement by Professor Elmer J. F. Arndt, Chairman of the Commission on Christian Social Action, interpreting the policies under discussion, was responded to by Dr. Donald Dearborn, Dean of Catawba College, Salisbury, North Carolina, who expressed his belief that delegates from all sections of the church could go home and thoughtfully consider the implications of the statements which had been adopted.

General Synod took regretful note of the untimely death of the Reverend Robert D. Brodt, and expressed its appreciation to members of the Commission whose terms expire in February, 1957, particularly Chairman Arndt who has served since the inception of the Commission in 1935 and Dr. Willard Kratz, who has served for some years as Vice-Chairman.

Upon recommendation of the committee, the Synod commended the program and activities of the Commission and encouraged the expansion of its services to pastors, congregations, and synods. It also urged all citizens "to register, to inform themselves fully concerning the issues and candidates, and vote conscientiously in all elections."

A resolution offered from the floor was also adopted, urging pastors and congregations to give intensive study to such problems as alcoholism, obscene magazines, delinquency, the improvement of motion pictures and television programs, the need for better psychiatric care, and the problems of our large military budget.

The Reverend Walter Press, pastor of Bethlehem Church, Ann Arbor, Michigan, was re-elected to another term on the Commission. In addition, the General Synod elected as new members for the term beginning February 1, 1957, the Reverend Clarence E. Josephson, D.D., assistant to the President of Elmhurst College, Elmhurst, Illinois; the Reverend Theodore A. Braun, pastor of Zion Church, Henderson, Kentucky; and Mr. C. B. Newell, Freemansburg, Pennsylvania, the Director of District 9, United Steel Workers of America, AFL-CIO.

In the discussion of the statement on Race Relations, Missionary Walter P. Trost, on furlough from his work in the Gold Coast of Africa, emphasized the importance of a clear witness in Race Relations at home from the standpoint of the good name of the United States and the effectiveness of the missionary witness abroad. It was notable also that in many other addresses and reports at the Synod, the importance of a Christian witness in all of life was underscored.

Resolutions On International Affairs

Adopted by the General Synod of the Evangelical and Reformed Church Lancaster, Pennsylvania, August 31—September 7, 1956

Our Nation's Responsibility to God. **General Synod affirms the following principles:**

1. **We acknowledge that our nation is responsible under God and that our responsibility under God includes respect for human rights, devotion to justice, development of the conditions which make for the welfare of all, and the pursuit of peace.**

2. **We acknowledge that our rich endowment of natural resources and human skills imposes upon our nation the obligation of stewardship and that this stewardship involves such use of those gifts as will not only benefit all our people but also assist other peoples to a higher standard of living.**

3. **We acknowledge that our responsibility to the people of the world requires persistent search for ways to transform suspicious co-existence into friendly competition and finally into cooperation among the nations, in accordance with God's purpose, through all useful means including the United Nations and its related agencies.**

* * * *

The United Nations. **General Synod reaffirms its conviction that the United Nations and its specialized agencies are of great value and of even greater potential value for peace and human well-being. General Synod encourages the members of the Evangelical and Reformed Church to give their moral support to the United Nations. General Synod urges the government of the United States to continue in its resolution to support and to make use of the channels provided by the United Nations in the development of foreign policy and studiously avoid any course which would weaken or undermine the effectiveness of the United Nations.**

* * * *

Technical Assistance and Economic Development. **General Synod, aware of the plenty we enjoy and the great need existing in many other parts of the world, believes that it would be both morally wrong and disastrous for the future of our nation to refuse to recognize the obligations our wealth and others' poverty impose. Therefore, General Synod encourages our government (1) to undertake an expanded long-range program of technical assistance and economic development; (2) to provide more generous appropriations to the technical assistance programs of the United Nations; and (3) to take the lead in the creation of a special fund for economic development under the auspices of the United Nations.**

* * * *

The Use of Nuclear Energy. **General Synod approves and heartily supports the actions of the United States Government in making available atomic materials and resources to other nations for peaceful uses, and urges our government to continue its efforts to expand that program. Further, General Synod urges the Federal government to continue its efforts to achieve effective international control of nuclear weapons.**

The Christian Citizen and Political Participation

Continued from Page 1, Col. 2

mined by the political machinery of the Democratic and Republican Parties. The political organizations choose the candidates and formulate policy. They determine not only who will run for office, but also the issues that will be carried to the people. At the present time these crucial decisions are determined by the six hundred thousand committeemen and committeewomen who control the major political parties. It is estimated that these committee people exert about three hundred times as much power as the ordinary citizen who simply *votes*. The major political decisions, such as the selection of candidates and issues, have already been determined before an election. The individual exerts very little power when he has had no part in the selection of the candidates and the determination of issues. The major political parties are the focus of political power because they determine the framework within which we citizens must make our choices.

If the major political parties are the major sources of political power, the concerned citizen must exercise his political rights within this context. The major political party seems to be the place where the greatest impact can be made. The so-called "Independents" exert very little political power. They sometimes contribute to the advancement of policies which they oppose. The lobby groups, with the exception of the small number devoted to public welfare, are concerned with the advancement of "special" interests. The Communist vote in Wisconsin contributed to the election of Joseph McCarthy to the U. S. Senate; the Natural Gas bill was literally rammed through Congress by a powerful lobby.

Recognizing these facts, it would seem that the major political parties, Democratic and Republican, are the most effective instruments of practical politics. In the long run, this is the place where the greatest impact is made and the general welfare enhanced. The major political parties are able to combine *power* and *policy* so that it serves the whole nation.

Christian Concern for Political Decisions

When we recognize the importance of political decisions and the decisive role of the major political parties, the Christian concern for practical politics comes to the foreground. It is unfortunate that more Christians, especially Protestants, do not engage in partisan politics. Many Protestants eschew political activity. They dismiss politics as "a dirty mess" and characterize politicians as "a sad lot." From the point of view of most Protestants "religion and politics don't mix." So the control of political parties and the direction of political strategy go by default to those who are willing to employ the political machinery for the enhancement of their own selfish interests. "While saints are engaged in introspection," John Dewey said, "burly sinners rule the world."

Kenneth L. Smith is Associate Professor of Applied Christianity, Crozer Theological Seminary, Chester, Pennsylvania.

We would ask those Christians for whom politics and religion don't mix to consider these observations. First, if politics is a "dirty mess," which it quite often is, it is not due to the inherent nature of politics but because "dirty" people are allowed to control the political machinery. Politics is the act of government. Ideally, it is the branch of moral philosophy that is concerned with the ethical relations of political institutions. Power may corrupt and absolute power may corrupt absolutely, but this is because "corrupt" individuals are permitted to control the political machinery. Politics can function properly only when clean and incorruptible people engage in political activity.

Secondly, it should be pointed out that one cannot champion democracy, which every American does, and at the same time repudiate active participation in practical politics. *Practical politics* is the instrument of the democratic process. Furthermore, practical politics depends upon *political organizations*. Therefore, the repudiation of practical politics leads to the repudiation of democracy.

There is truth to the assertion that an indifferent citizenry often receives just about what it deserves. And Plato's sage remark is still applicable to the twentieth century: "The penalty that good men pay for indifference to public affairs is to be ruled by evil men." Unless we Protestants become more concerned about practical politics, there is always the distinct possibility that we will be ruled by evil men. The continuation of democracy is contingent upon the activity of honest and intelligent citizens. To be sure, we Protestants do not have a monopoly upon honesty and intelligence, but we do have the theological and ethical presuppositions that are able to produce citizens with these traits.

The Christian in Politics

What kind of Christians do we need in politics? Is it enough merely to be an affiliate of one of the trunkline Protestant denominations and exemplify the traditional Puritan virtues? No! This is hardly enough. But this is usually the only criterion that we employ. This means that the Protestants who are concerned about politics employ *nonpolitical criteria*. They tend to emphasize personalities rather than policies; they think in terms of platitudes rather than issues; they look at surface phenomena rather than the broad political questions regarding policies and programs. For example, J. Strom Thurmond, the Dixiecrat candidate in 1948, was acceptable because he was a teetotaler although he ran on a racist platform. Harry Truman was unacceptable because he employed non-Sunday school language to describe Drew Pearson, although he was concerned about civil rights. We praised Chiang Kai-shek because he was a "good Methodist" and ignored his corrupt military regime. We protest corruption in the form of fur coats, deepfreezes, and free excursions to Florida, but we raise no questions about Dixon-Yates, the Cheese Deal, the Natural Gas Lobby. The Protestant ministers in the geographical locality with which I am familiar have become concerned only once in nine years about the political situation. On this occasion the issue boiled down to a Catholic versus Protestant controversy. The candidates with a Protestant affiliation were endorsed on both sides for no other reason than the fact that they were Protestants. Denominational affiliation

Continued on Page 4, Col. 1

Christian Community

Published by the Commission on Christian Social Action of the Evangelical and Reformed Church, 2969 West 25th St., Cleveland 13, Ohio. Executive Secretary and Editor: Huber F. Klemme; Associate Secretaries: F. Nelsen Schlegel and Chester L. Marcus. Sent free to pastors and social action committees. Individual subscriptions, 75 cents; group subscriptions, 10 or more to one address, 50 cents each per year. Single copies, 10 cents; ten or more, 5 cents each.

The Christian Citizen and Political Participation

Continued from Page 3, Col. 3

was the only criterion; issues were not even mentioned.

The individualistic and moralistic approach, typical of Protestant politics, ignores almost completely the ethical and moral dimensions of political decisions. Practical politics is the art of acquiring power and the use of power for the advancement of certain policies. The ethical and moral questions arise about the acquisition of power and about the policies that are pursued. Therefore, the fundamental questions are not those pertaining to the personal character of the individual, although these are important, but those regarding the policies he pursues, the people who support him, and the interests he represents.

We need Protestants in politics, but we need certain kinds of Protestants. Furthermore, we need certain attitudes among Protestants regarding candidates and issues. The politically relevant question about Protestants in politics is not the question of denominational affiliation. We need Protestants who will support policies and programs that will enhance the freedom and security of all Americans, regardless of race or creed. We need Protestant voters who will make their choices on the basis of other reasons than that Roosevelt's sons had a habit of getting divorces, Al Smith was a Catholic, Adlai Stevenson is divorced and is a Unitarian,* and Dwight Eisenhower is a "good Presbyterian." We need Protestants in politics, but we need Protestants who understand the ins and outs of practical politics and who support policies and programs which represent all United States citizens.

***EDITOR'S NOTE. According to newspaper accounts, Adlai Stevenson since completing his term as governor of Illinois has joined a Presbyterian Church. Dr. Smith's reference is to the tone of much popular discussion in previous elections.**

—H. F. K.

COMMISSION MEETS WITH CONGREGATIONAL CHRISTIANS

The Commission on Christian Social Action will have its Fall meeting at the Hotel Hollenden, Cleveland, Ohio on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday, October 30, 31 and November 1.

A portion of the sessions will be devoted to a joint consultation with the Council for Social Action of the Congregational Christian Churches concerning increased cooperation, looking toward the union of the two denominations in 1957 and the program of social action in the United Church thereafter.

Washington Seminar Dates Announced

The 1957 Churchmen's Washington Seminar, sponsored by the social education and action agencies of 19 denominations including our own, will be held on Capitol Hill, February 26 to March 1.

Added interest is attached to this year's program in that a new Congress —and, perhaps, a new Administration— will be getting into action at the time. For this reason, the date has been fixed later than usual.

The Evangelical and Reformed Church has been given a maximum quota of 26 representatives. The distinction of being the first person to send his registration is Mr. Ronald T. Tenney, a layman from Fairmont, Minnesota.

Further information and registration applications may be secured from the office of the Commission on Christian Social Action and must be submitted, accompanied by ten dollar registration fee, not later than January 10.

World Order Sunday

Sunday, October 21 is World Order Sunday, and has again been recognized by the National Council of Churches through the issuance of a special message.

Copies of this message as well as suggestions for observing United Nations Week, prepared by the Church Peace Union, may be secured from the office of the Commission on Christian Social Action. Enclose 10c for a single copy of each. Special rates for quantity orders.

ABOUT "A TRAIN OF ACTION"

Our office is already receiving some favorable comments on *A Train of Action,* the 28-minute sound, color motion picture produced in consultation with our Commission, to show how a church's community witness can become alive.

It was shown at six Women's Guild Summer Conferences and cordially received by the viewers there.

As announced in the September issue of CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY, it may be rented from the Bureau of Audio-Visual Aids, 1505 Race Street, Philadelphia 2, Pennsylvania, and 1720 Chouteau Avenue, St. Louis 3, Missouri. The rental price for one showing is $12.00. A guide suggesting ways to use the film accompanies the print.

In response to a number of requests, the Bureau has stated that the film may be rented for one week at a fee of $36.00. Any number of showings may be had for this one charge.

Synodical committees on Christian Social Action, or interested local groups will find it highly advantageous to schedule showings in the churches of a synod or a region and divide the costs accordingly.

LAST CALL FOR UN SEMINAR

Reservations for the United Nations Seminar, October 15 to 17, are still open. But if you are planning to attend, don't put it off any longer, or you may be left out.

Last-minute requests, accompanied by six dollars registration, should be sent to Dr. Herman F. Reissig, 289 Fourth Avenue, New York 10, N. Y.

HAVE YOU ORDERED?

Have you ordered the aids you would like to have as the election campaign gets into its last weeks?

Available from the Commission on Christian Social Action are the following:

Christian Responsibility in the 1956 Election—5c per copy

The Christian Citizen Looks at the 84th Congress—10c per copy

Questions for Christians—5c per copy

Don't wait too long.